

## **Great Britain and Germany before the First World War**

### **Aufgaben**

- 1 Sum up the author's reasoning. (Material)  
**(30 BE)**
  
- 2 Taking the text into account, characterize the development of the relationship of the major European powers from 1890 to 1914.  
**(40 BE)**
  
- 3 “[W]e have intervened regularly [...] in the affairs of Europe and of the world, and great advantage to European peace has resulted [...] from our interference.” (Material)  
Assess to what extent this statement also applies to the years between the two world wars.  
**(30 BE)**

**Material****Winston Churchill: The significance of the British Navy (1914)**

*In his capacity as First Lord of the Admiralty, Churchill gave this speech on the naval budget to the House of Commons on 17 March, 1914.*

We must begin by recognising how different is the part played by our navy from that of the navies of every other country. Alone among the great modern States, we can neither defend the soil upon which we live nor subsist upon its produce. Our whole Regular Army is liable<sup>1</sup> to be ordered abroad for the defence of India. The food of our people, the raw material of our industries, the commerce which  
5 constitutes our wealth, have to be protected as they traverse thousands of miles of sea and ocean from every quarter of the globe. Here we must consider the disparity of risks and stakes between us and other naval Powers. Defeat to Germany at sea means nothing but loss of the ships sunk or damaged in battle. Behind the German 'Dreadnoughts'<sup>2</sup> stand four and a half million soldiers, and a narrow sea-front bristling with fortresses and batteries. Nothing we could do, after a naval victory, could affect the  
10 safety or freedom of a single German hamlet<sup>3</sup>.

Behind the British line of battle are the long, light-defended stretches of the East Coast, our endless trade routes and food routes, our small Army and our vast peaceful population, with their immense possessions. The burden of responsibility laid upon the British Navy is heavy, and its weight increases year by year. All the world is building ships of the greatest power, training officers and men, creating  
15 arsenals, and laying broad and deep the foundations of future permanent naval development and expansion. [...] None of these Powers need, like us, navies to defend their actual independence or safety. They build them so as to play a part in the world's affairs. It is sport to them. It is life and death to us. [...]

We have got all we want in territory, but our claim to be left in undisputed enjoyment of vast and  
20 splendid possessions, largely acquired by war and largely maintained by force, is one which often seems less reasonable to others than to us. Further, we have intervened regularly, as it was our duty to do, and as we could not help doing, in the affairs of Europe and of the world, and great advantage to European peace has resulted, even in this last year, from our interference. We have responsibilities in many quarters today. We are far from being detached from the problems of Europe. We have passed  
25 through a year of continuous anxiety, and, although His Majesty's Government believe foundations of peace among the Great Powers have been strengthened, yet the causes which might lead to a general war have not been removed and often remind us of their presence. There has not been the slightest abatement<sup>4</sup> of naval and military preparation. On the contrary, we are witnessing this year increases of expenditure by Continental Powers in armaments beyond all previous experience. The world is armed  
30 as it was never armed before. Every suggestion or arrest of limitation has so far been ineffectual. From time to time awkward things happen, and situations occur which make it necessary that the naval force at our immediate disposal, now in this quarter, now in that, should be rapidly counted up. On such occasions the responsibilities which rest on the Admiralty come home with brutal reality to those who are responsible, and unless our naval strength were solidly, amply, and unswervingly<sup>5</sup> maintained, the  
35 government could not feel that they were doing their duty to the country.

Winston S. Churchill (Hg.): *Never Give in! The Best of Winston Churchill's Speeches*. London 2003, S. 56–58.

<sup>1</sup> liable – zu etwas neigend

<sup>2</sup> New type of powerful battleships introduced at the beginning of the 20th century.

<sup>3</sup> hamlet – Dorf, kleine Ortschaft

<sup>4</sup> abatement – Abnahme, Rückgang

<sup>5</sup> unswerving – unbeirrbar, unerschütterlich